

Adrian Koslowsky (82)

11.15 am Tuesday 28th January 2025 at All Saints Kings Heath, followed by burial at Robin Hood Cemetery

God placed Man in the Garden to till it and to keep it. (Genesis 2:15)

We gather to honour a literary, artistic man who got his hands dirty, working for hours in his garden, appreciating the combination of humility and joy that growing things can give.

The Lord your God is God of gods... who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the foreigner, providing them with food and clothing. You also shall love the foreigner, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 10:18-19)

The sonorous command rings through the Hebrew scriptures, but we need look no further than our friend Adrian, who instinctively reached across cultural boundaries, impulsively reached out to refugees, and equipped them with language to connect and settle. Although born here, his own anglo polish heritage perhaps opening up his curiosity about difference.

“Unless you become like a child you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:3) As well read as anyone you might meet, politically astute, craggy looks – giving us an idea of what Daniel Craig will look like at eighty two - Adrian never lost his boyish glee, shifting foot to foot with a twinkling eye and grin as he told you something absurd. He was in touch and at ease with the vulnerable boy within.

PRAYER

God, when your Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, she helped people understand each other's language and enjoy their difference. We gather to give you thanks for our brother Adrian, who in his own distinct way joined you in that work. Your spirit burned like kindly fire, the first disciples said. We gather inspired by Adrian's burning passion for justice that he never allowed to be destructive. Send your spirit now to inspire and reassure us as we begin to accept Adrian's death. Assure us that your Spirit will raise him to the eternal, peaceable life of heaven. We pray through Christ who died at cruel human hands, and rose again to forgive and heal. Amen.

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Horae Canonicae: Lauds by W H Auden

Among the leaves the small birds sing;
The crow of the cock commands awaking:
In solitude, for company.

Bright shines the sun on creatures mortal;
Men of their neighbours become sensible:
In solitude, for company.

The crow of the cock commands awaking;
Already the mass-bell goes dong-ding:
In solitude, for company.

Men of their neighbours become sensible;
God bless the Realm, God bless the People:
In solitude, for company.

Already the mass-bell goes dong-ding;
The dripping mill-wheel is again turning:
In solitude, for company.

God bless the Realm, God bless the People;
God bless this green world temporal:
In solitude, for company.

The dripping mill-wheel is again turning;
Among the leaves the small birds sing:
In solitude, for company.

AMOS 8:4-8

Hear this, you that trample on the needy,
and bring to ruin the poor of the land,
saying, 'When will the new moon be over
so that we may sell grain;
and the sabbath,
so that we may offer wheat for sale?
We will make the ephah small and the shekel great,
and practise deceit with false balances,
buying the poor for silver
and the needy for a pair of sandals,
and selling the sweepings of the wheat.'

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The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob:
Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.
Shall not the land tremble on this account,
and everyone mourn who lives in it,
and all of it rise like the Nile,
and be tossed about and sink again, like the Nile of Egypt?

ADDRESS

"Adrian didn't only teach me English," said Michael, "he taught me humanity." They'd met at the Solihull drop in for Refugees and Asylum Seekers where, typically, Adrian had volunteered. It is noble to do things *for* people. Adrian, however, was not-self congratulatory or superior. His helping out quickly became friendship. He wanted to be *with* people. There was a mutuality; a dignified exchange of skills. His luo was fixed by an Iranian stranger who became a wonderful friend. As Deuteronomy said: don't just do things for foreigners. "Love the foreigner, remembering your foreignness."

Humanity is a heart-warming theme in the way people speak of Adrian. All Saints friend, Phil Brookes, said:

"I was taught English by Mr Kozlowski, Koza , behind his back, at St Thomas Aquinas school in the mid 70's. He was a very popular teacher with all the boys, I remember him being very encouraging, creative and enthusiastic about the subject. Mostly I remember him in the library office, which as 6th formers he would allow us into , sharing cassette tapes of Pete and Dud which seemed quite risqué but hilarious. He was one of those teachers who interacted with us on a more human level than most, opening a window onto the real world beyond school

I also recall his trumpet playing, which wasn't great , but he was very keen and encouraged me as a musician even if our chosen genres were very different."

Setting others on their feet, helping others express themselves, helping others define their humanity was Adrian's default setting. That he was unselfconscious about it shows it was real Christian virtue. His curiosity about human diversity meant his faith would always be curious, questioning and that meant sometimes unsettled. That's one of the reasons he was such a fine Bible reader in Church. Reading for us in the Sunday service, his cracked voice conveyed his own human vulnerability yet without getting in the way. He read with such a measured pace you had time to take it in, without Adrian interpreting for you. It showed such care with the words that it was like he was holding out something fragile and beautiful to show us; there was a gentle wonder in his Bible voice, as though he was showing

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you a butterfly had settled in his palm and opened its wings. Only someone with an agnostic aspect could read like that.

Somehow that attractive ambivalence allowed him to hold his anger at injustice, his sense of frustration at human foolishness, his bewilderment at cruelty, without himself becoming violent or enraged. Adrian was hurt and puzzled by the kinds of hypocrisy and contradiction, such as Amos called out in his day and journalists like Robert Fisk and Patrick Cockburn do today, but he didn't make our common catastrophic mistake of turning righteous anger into unrighteous aggression.

Perhaps his wistfulness also arose from his sense of solitude, which he lived comfortably with because he felt part of a meaningful community. Adrian would, I am sure, want you, his friends, to know his gratitude. Your respect, affection and love have enabled him to live a full life "in solitude, for company."

PRAYERS

God, we thank you for Adrian, whose company helped us stop and think; whose wistfulness helped resist unhealthy certainty; whose curiosity helped us find courage to reach across cultural boundaries.

As we mourn the loss of his measured, thoughtful, rugged voice, and admire his political awareness, we pray for such voices to be raised in every generation, resisting prejudice, alert to injustice, compassionate to the stranger. As we remember his understanding of the power of words, help us listen and speak more graciously.

Admiring his love for and knowledge of art and poetry, we pray for those whose calling is to craft poems and make art to stir the soul. We pray for teachers of literature the world over, that their young pupils may learn emotional intelligence to guide and anchor them in this frantic world. We pray for teachers of language the world over, that human connection be made across forbidding divides, and difference turn from threat to delight.

We pray for the places that mattered most to Adrian: for the peace and health of Poland. We pray for Iran, challenge injustice there and prejudice here. We pray for Birmingham in all its complexity and wondrous diversity.

Help us, Lord, to accept Adrian's death: No more gooseberries or spare tomato plant, no more poems or meals to share. Deepen our sense of meaningful community. Help us be together in such a way that solitude need never mean loneliness.